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MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE



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Bread Loaf School of English

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BREAD LOAF SCHOOL OF ENGLISH

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PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENTS

1959

All matters relative to your room and board, mail, and any charges you may incur (apart from the regular bill for tuition, board and room) should be referred to Mr. Donovan, Resident Manager, at the INN DESK.

For details regarding the management of the School, please make inquiry at the DIRECTOR'S OFFICE. All matters pertaining to your initial registration and payment of bills, information about courses, lectures, and graduate credit should be referred to the SECRETARY'S OFFICE. Director R. L. Cook and Miss Lillian Becker, Secretary, are the staff to whom you should bring your request for information about details of the School.

REGISTRATION PROCEDURE

Students should obtain confirmation of their courses from the Secretary's Office as soon after arrival at Bread Loaf as possible. Students who have not completed registration of courses in advance must personally consult with the Director. Appointments may be made with Miss Becker.

Registration is not completed until a registration card, a "notify in case of accident" card, a college library registration card, and, in certain cases, an off-campus address card have been returned to the Secretary's Office. Please be sure to fill in the registration card on both sides.

A representative of the College Treasurer's Office will be in the Blue Parlor on Wednesday, June 24. It is requested that all bills which have not been paid be attended to at this time. Receipts for bills paid in advance may be obtained from the Treasurer at this time.

Please keep in mind the fact that if you wish to change your status from that of a non-credit student to that of a credit student or vice versa in any course, this change must be made on or before June 27. All changes in courses must be made with the approval of the Director. For a change from one course to another, after June 27, a charge of one dollar will be made. All persons desiring to visit classes in which they are not enrolled must also obtain permission from the Director.

MAIL SCHEDULE

Outgoing mail must be posted not later than 9:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. Mail will be ready for distribution at the following hours: 10:30 A.M. and 3:30 P.M.

MEAL HOURS

In a day or two the regular seating plan will go into effect. Please consult the chart on the dining room door to ascertain your table assignments.

Daily

Breakfast 7:30-8:00 A. M.
Luncheon 12:45-1:00 P. M.
Dinner 6:00-6:15 P. M.

Sunday

Breakfast 8:00-8:30 A. M.
Dinner 1:00-1:30 P. M.
Supper 6:00-6:30 P. M.

Since most of the waiters and waitresses are students, it is urgently requested that all students come to meals promptly, especially to breakfast, so that those who are waiting on table may be able to reach their classes on time. In the morning the door will be closed at 8:00. No students may be served breakfast after that time. Please do not ask the head waiter to make exceptions to this regulation. He has no authority to do so.

SUPPLIES

Stationery, notebook paper, pencils, ink, etc., may be purchased at the Bookstore, post cards at the Front Desk, and cigarettes at the Snack Bar. It is impossible for credit to be extended, so please do not ask for it.

BOOKSTORE

It is urgently requested that students purchase their texts immediately because it is frequently necessary for us to order additional copies. It is impossible to allow students to maintain charge accounts at the Bookstore, and we hope that students will cooperate by not asking for any favors of this kind. The hours when the Bookstore will be open will be announced soon.

BREAD LOAF PARKING REGULATIONS

A preliminary notice concerning parking has been made in the bulletin. Stringently enforced state laws prohibit the parking of cars on the side of the highway, and it is requested that students and guests endeavor to keep the roads clear in front of the Inn. Students living in Maple may park their cars in the space behind the cottage; students at Tamarack on the lawn under the trees by the main road. All others should use the parking space near the Barn.

PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENTS

In the Little Theatre at 8:15 Wednesday evening, Dr. Freeman, director of the Summer Schools, and Mr. Cook will speak briefly. An informal reception will be held in the Recreation Hall in the Barn directly after the preliminary meeting in the Little Theatre.

Mr. Robert Frost will give a lecture-reading at 8:15 P.M. on Monday, June 29.

THE CONTINUING DISCOURSE

June 24, 1959

R. L. Cook

At each new session of the Bread Loaf School of English we must ask ourselves what we are trying to do in the area of higher learning. Once we have clarified our objectives, the correlative to the inquiry is simple. It is: to get on with our objectives. Tomorrow morning at 8:30 we do get on with them. But, for a short interval this evening at the opening of the fortieth session, let us consider the theme of the continuing discourse that unites the academic and the literary worlds - the world of education and the world of imaginative creation. To introduce this theme of the continuing discourse I have chosen two quotations, the first from the 18th century English ~~mythic~~ poet, William Blake, and the second from the late 19th century American realist, Stephen Crane.

On August 23, 1799 Blake wrote to the Rev'd Dr. Trusler: "And I know that This World Is a World of Imagination & Vision. I see Everything I paint In This World, and Every body does not see alike....The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of Others only a Green thing which stands in the way." Blake then added climactically, "As a man is, so he sees." The second quotation is from Stephen Crane. In a letter to his friend Hilliard, he once wrote: "For I understand that a man is born into the world with his own pair of eyes, and he is not at all responsible for his vision - he is merely responsible for his quality of personal honesty. To keep close to this personal honesty is my supreme ambition." The Blake quotation focusses on relativism in observation: what is an object of joy to one person is an obstruction to another. The Crane quotation emphasizes the observer's responsibility in being true to what he sees; in effect, the quality of personal honesty to what is seen.

I haven't the slightest idea of trying to duck behind Blake and Crane as though I would call all the literary gods and prophets to stand as my witnesses. I only

want to make clear to this Bread Loaf audience concerned with reading literature that our aims and attitudes probably bear some resemblance to those of writers whose insights and personal goals help to clarify and identify our own objectives. Here on the mountain we are concerned with reading literature, which is to say, here we are concerned with contemplating the world of imagination and vision - Milton's and Kafka's, Dreiser's and Shakespeare's, Cervantes' and Conrad's, Emily Dickinson's and George Eliot's. Whether we are moved to tears or see only "a Green thing" depends upon the kind of temperament, intelligence, and sensibility with which we are endowed. But we try to see something and we try to see it as clearly as we can. As a man is, so then he sees, and to keep close to personal honesty is for the reader no less than the writer a supreme ambition.

You will notice a reference was made not to the study of literature but to the reading of literature. This was not a careless slip; it was an intentional emphasis. What I had in mind was the phrase 'reading literature' as it is used in the great English universities where the student does not study courses in politics, or history, or economics, or classics, or philosophy, or literature, but instead reads thoughtfully, expansively and pleasurable in a field of knowledge. Here, similarly at Bread Loaf, we encourage reading literature as though it were a continuing discourse. We read to hear the voices as they sound familiarly on the page, tones as different as Ascham's from Lawrence's, or Camus' from Swift's, or Dostoevski's from Charlotte Bronte's, but still human voices moved by the pulse of passion.

There is naturally a great deal more implied in the phrase 'continuing discourse' than the stylistic voice of the "master-spirits." At Bread Loaf an animating principle should give the discourse a continuing personal significance. The source of this principle is to be found in the attitude of mind a person takes toward the

books he reads. This animating principle was characterized with becoming classical restraint and clarity in Dr. Moses Hadas' address of last August, delivered before those who received the Middlebury degree of Master of Arts at the English School. Dr. Hadas talked about the amateur and the professional in education. Commonly we associate the controversial words amateur and professional with the world of sports, but Dr. Hadas did not make an invidious distinction between amateurism and professionalism. As becomes a classical humanist, he distinguished between them with distributive justice. He rendered unto the professional the status of his professionalism and unto the amateur the spirit of his amateurism. Yet, as you might well infer, the spirit of the English School was, he thought, to be associated, not with academic professionalism but rather with the spirit of the amateur. Here in the spirit of the amateur, we function as the steward of the humanistic tradition and cherish its legacy with special care. "We need," Dr. Hadas reminded us, "a proportion of people with sufficient ballast and sufficient perspective to resist the professionals when they poach beyond their proper jurisdiction." This is the point - very much the point - that the amateur should be wise enough to leave the professional to his own persuasions and preoccupations. Meanwhile the amateur is concerned with "the perpetuation and assimilation of the humanistic legacy through a traditional canon of books." The amateur is indeed a strengthener and a propagator of this tradition. This is his function. If this is true, then this is what we should be about while reading literature. Amateurism in this sense becomes our animating principle, and it is the spirit of the amateur with his perceptive intelligence and responsive sensibility that activates the continuing discourse and relates one tradition with another, and enables us, as Emerson says, to read American history in Aristophanes, Hafiz and Rabelais.

One way to strengthen and propagate the humanistic tradition is by practising a spirited amateurism in our professional schools of higher learning. It is precisely at the level of higher learning where the humanistic principle should animate and keep the discourse of literature a continuous and renewable one. Otherwise we get a deadly examine Alexandrian academicism. That there is plenty of academicism in our educational system is apparent. We need the antibody of imaginative creativeness.

To illustrate this spirited humanistic principle in the books we read I have chosen a particular chapter in Hemingway's For Whom the Bell Tolls. Anyone in this audience might just as reasonably have chosen another novel, play, poem or essay. I have chosen Hemingway because his novel must be familiar to most students of literature in one way or another. You may have seen the cinema version, or perhaps the recent presentation on the T V. Certainly you remember reading it after its publication in 1940. I seriously doubt that anyone will challenge the inclusion of this novel in the humanistic legacy. Hemingway who, in the twenties and thirties, was considered a formidable high priest in "the cult of cruelty," is now, by virtue of this novel, The Old Man and the Sea (1952), and the Nobel Award in 1954, highly regarded as sympathetic to the ordeals of the human spirit and its dignified moral transcendence of physical defeat.

That Hemingway knows Spain no one will deny. His novel has "the air of reality," which Henry James thought an important recommendation in the art of fiction. That he was also anti-fascist in the Spanish Civil War of 1936 is undeniable. Early in the conflict he raised money to help buy ambulances for the Madrid Loyalists, and then he was on the scene as correspondent, following the course of the terrible war at Guadalajara, Jarama, Madrid, Teruel, and the first and second battles of the Ebro. Like the ubiquitous Kilroy, he was most definitely there. When the war was over

and the hearts of the Loyalists in exile were filled with bitterness, misery, and despair, Hemingway wrote his long novel in the relatively short working period of fifteen months. Published in 1940, the popular response was applaudive, but the critical reaction has been a little more reserved. What I find in this novel is Blake's world of imagination, Crane's personal honesty, and a familiar voice in the continuing humanistic discourse.

As you recall in F W B T, Robert Jordan, the young American teacher of Spanish at the University of Montana, returned to Spain during the Civil War to serve the cause of the Loyalists as a dynamiter. Yet it is neither Jordan nor the anti-fascist guerrilla band of Pablo hiding out in the mountains, who create the focal situation of this narrative. Both the young American as protagonist and the guerrilla band as a fighting unit react to a similar situation. There is a bridge to be blown in the territory where the band has its hide-out. In consequence, when the bridge is blown the fascist Navarrese cavalry will at once ferret out and liquidate the band. The American dynamiter likes neither the tactical plan of blowing the bridge nor the psychological problem of rallying the diffident guerrilla band into accepting the plan. When the bridge is blown it will be impossible for the band to remain longer in the vicinity whether the operation is successful or unsuccessful. They must be prepared to abandon their hide-out and scurry to a new base of operations. And under the duress of war it is not easy to find sanctuary in a country torn by civil strife where the enemy well might be your brother who knows your habits and capacities.

Moreover, Jordan, who has less than three days to make the plans and carry them out, must forge the guerrillas into an efficient fighting unit. He does this effectively by gaining the confidence of all but the leader of the band, and by

remaining cool and courageous in the handling of the Navarrese cavalry who make a surprise appearance. When, because of the temporary defection of the moody guerrilla leader, Jordan has to blow the bridge without exploder, caps and fuses, he makes a virtue of his necessity. Yet, in the end, he does not escape the consequences of his commitment. He goes down fighting.

This is, I confess, a most inadequate preliminary sketch of the physical, military, and psychological situation in F W B T, but the point I want to make this evening is quite other than a close scrutiny of the situation and the reaction of the *dramatis personae* to it. What interests me - and I hope you - is how Ernest Hemingway contributes to the continuing humanistic discourse by projecting before us in one microcosmic scene, as Blake would say, the world of imagination and vision. What further interests me is that Hemingway does it with the special honesty of observation which Stephen Crane earlier called to our attention.

If you are at all hesitant about accepting the conjunction of the names of Hemingway and Blake, consider the view of the former on the art of fiction. A writer's "standard of fidelity to the truth should be so high," Hemingway contends, "that his invention, out of his experience, should produce a truer account than anything factual can be. For facts can be observed badly; and when a good writer is creating something, he has time and scope to make it an absolute truth." Let us hold in abeyance Hemingway's statement about "absolute truth," while we remember what he says about inventing something out of his experience truer than anything factual can be. And the reason for this? Because the writer has "time and scope." Like Flaubert, Hemingway believes the writer can and should give his "invention" dedicated concern. He can, as it is said of Hemingway, revise his manuscript with ultimate patience and deliberate self-criticism. And meditation gives scope.

"When the eyes have done their part/ Then thought must lengthen it in the heart," the Elizabethan lyrst Samuel Daniel reminds us. This seems to be the principle under which Hemingway operates in his writing.

Such an intimate knowledge of both heart and head, eyes and thought, time and scope have, I am sure, gone into the making of chapter thirty-four of F W B T. In this chapter, of only five pages, I find the core of what I want to say this evening about the animating principle of honesty in observation and the continuing humanistic discourse. At first glance, the chapter seems to be a relatively minor although not unimportant one. This is the narrative situation. The time to blow the bridge draws near and Jordan, the American dynamiter, realizes that the fascists have already anticipated the Loyalists' attack at daylight. However, the orders to which Jordan is scrupulously faithful require that the bridge be blown at the beginning of the Loyalist attack to prevent the fascists from re-inforcing their lines. Now, if Jordan can only get word in time to Golz, the Loyalist commander, advising him that the fascists are forewarned, then the futile attack might be halted.

The chapter opens with Andrès, one of two brothers in the guerrilla band, assigned to carry a message through the fascist lines to Golz. Often Andrès has threaded the lines and, with luck and by carrying no pack, it should not take him longer than three hours. He leaves the mountain hide-out in the early evening and in the morning Jordan must blow the bridge unless his orders are cancelled by Golz. If there is a sound of bombs in the distance Jordan will know he must blow it, that either Golz did not receive his message or that he could not take advantage of it.

Andrès sets off down the mountain in the dark, avoids a lighted fascist outpost in a farmhouse, cunningly steps over a trip wife, follows a stream, crosses a meadow between haycocks, and passes successfully over a second trip wire. It is a

quiet, clear night, and when he comes upon the hay cocks, he thinks: "(The fascists) have all the hay they need and all the grain. They have much."

Like his companions, Andrés accepts the rules, such as they are. He does not make them. It is not the gods but the fascists--yes, and the Loyalists--who kill other men like flies for their sport. And because this terrible situation of the war is man-made, therefore the penalties which go with it are man-made. You kill fascists or they kill you. This Andrés realizes but in no way is he a revolutionary à l'outrance.

No matter how anxious Andrés is to fulfil his obligation and deliver the message, he feels the potential reprieve that goes with his assignment. It is quite possible that he will not get back to the mountains in time for the danger at the blowing of the bridge. He recalls what happened to another guerrilla leader--El Sordo and his band--only this afternoon on a hillside; how the formidable Navarrese cavalry patrol wiped out the remnants of El Sordo's band. Surely the fascists have teeth. Yet Andrés is not fearful; he only thinks with a Spanish peasant's fatalism and staunchness of what remains to be done. Since he agreed to support the blowing of the bridge, he will not be one to back down. "What (the band) had to do they would do."

Making his way toward the Loyalist lines, he remembers how greatly respected for his bravery he was at the bull-baitings during the fiestas in his village. But he also remembers how he felt on those mornings of the fiesta when he awakaned to hear the rain and he knew it was too wet for the bull-baiting and was so intrepid he was called the Bulldog, still "he knew that there was no better feeling than that one sound the rain gave when he knew he would not have to do it." This trip was also a reprieve, but he would return if possible "for the affair of the posts and

the bridge." His brother and his friends--"They are all in it"--and so, too, is he, and, like them, he, too, must face what is to be faced. He says, "I must deliver this message now quickly and well and then make all haste to return in time for the assault on the posts." He knows he would take pleasure in killing some fascists, and he believes in the possibility of a valid action against the fascists tomorrow in the attack. "That tomorrow should come and that I should be there."

Climbing a steep slope, a partridge flew up, startling him, and he thinks that it must have been nesting and that the eggs must be close by. If it were not a time of war he would tie a handkerchief to a bush and later return to look for the eggs and hatch them in a poultry yard. In the confusion and irrationality of war, he muses: "I would like such small and regular things." He would tether the partridges, clip their wings, use them for callers. And he thinks also how if it were not wartime, he and his brother, Eladio, could go back in the Sierra de Gredos where there were "fine streams for trout and for crayfish too."

But it is wartime, and because their father had been a Loyalist, he and Eladio are on this side. If their father had been a fascist, it would be otherwise and they would be soldiers, not members of Pablo's band. Then there would not be the problems of this irregular fighting. "It was easier to live under a regime than to fight it." He knows the difficulty, he feels the situation, and how those like himself are made to resist suffering. The fascists are the attackers; they forced the decision. Still he would like to be able to tie his handkerchief to the bush and return for the partridge eggs.

Andrés now has no house, no family, only a brother. And he has only the four grenades in his pocket, and a carbine on his back and the message which he must deliver as quickly as possible. On the verge of self-pity, he mocks himself for

his "noble thinking." As he draws close to the top of the ridge, he is preemptorily challenged by the Loyalists. There is considerable give-and-take and then he crosses the line, but reaches Golz with the message too late to cancel the futile attack.

In this short chapter--a microcosmic one indeed--Hemingway participates in our continuing humanistic discourse. He shows us that Blake's world of art can be taken as reality, and that the writer, inventing out of his experience, does produce "a truer account than anything factual can be." One reason for this is because the art of arts in literature, as in painting, is implication; it is the three strokes of the brush in the John Singer Sargent painting that identify the dancer's shoe, or the curved line in a Japanese print that suggests a bird in flight. Andrés' little journey sums up the fears and hopes, beliefs and uncertainties of the whole Spanish conflict.

In all good art invariably there is a sense of control over materials. The levy on any performance is self-discipline, and by compressing the force of the situation, Hemingway here gets the wonderful little explosions of art as he does in his other masterly fiction. The reader notices that the contents of the chapter represent the sum of Andrés' musing as he carries the message. Yet it is a fine chapter for other reasons. In the context of the narrative it shows Hemingway's inventive skill. Art, which consists in an ability to conceal the act of disclosure, is nowhere better seen than here. The chapter is technically a necessary link between Jordan's thinking and the mounting of Golz's incipient attack. It gives a searching insight into Spanish temperament, compounded of fatalism, determination, courage, humor, and self-satire. There is, moreover, Andrés' filial regard and, in his loyalty to Pablo's band, acknowledgement and acceptance of responsibility. There is also the sense of the old and wonted ways of the earth--the terrain, the

weather, the piled hay, the nesting partridge, the prospective fishing. Andrès, who likes the small regular things, moves easily in a natural rhythm. Above all, he is humanly identified in his desire for a reprieve, and personally in his willingness to go through with something.

There is further, Andrès' relationship to the war. Politically undeveloped, he takes his politics by paternal inheritance. He fights as his father would. He is born into his position and here is where his friends are. Nor is he unwitting of fascist strength or superiority. They will force the decisions, but they will not find the Loyalists supine.

In effect, this modest scene is synecdoche, a part that stands for the whole, a microcosm which mirrors the tensions of a human being who wishes to live, but who in relationship to his duty is aware of the imminence of death. Reflected in the affair of the blowing of the bridge is the totality of the Civil War in Spain, in the issues, in the moves and countermoves of protagonist and antagonist, and in the short, simple, heroic annals of its minor partisans as well as in the suspect record of the defective foreign leaders. Hemingway says that if you get to see the world clear and as a whole, "then any part you make will represent the whole if it's made truly." It is asking much to see the world "clear and as a whole," but at least in the relationship to the narrative as a whole, Hemingway has made the little chapter on Andrès, like Melville's "The Lee Shore" in Moby Dick, very truly, and in so doing he has made it a part of the continuing humanistic discourse.

This great discourse excites us historically in the Homeric epics and the Norse sagas, continues in Beowulf and Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight, and in Don Quixote and in For Whom the Bell Tolls. It is thoroughly animated to those who read literature for the immense pleasure of artistic insight that is in it. It is the same

kind of pleasure we find in War and Peace in the scene at the close of section 16 in Part III where Prince Andrey Bolkonsky has his first remarkable initiation into battle at Austerlitz.

"'What's this? am I falling? my legs are giving way under me,' he thought and fell on his back. He opened his eyes, hoping to see how the struggle of the French soldiers with the artilleryman was ending, and eager to know whether the red-haired artilleryman was killed or not, whether the cannons had been taken or saved. But he saw nothing of all that. Above him there was nothing but the sky--the lofty sky, not clear, but still immeasurably lofty, with grey clouds creeping quietly over it. 'How quietly, peacefully, and triumphantly, and not like us running, shouting, and fighting, not like the Frenchman and artilleryman dragging the mop from one another with frightened and frantic faces, how differently are those clouds creeping over that lofty, limitless sky. How was it I did not see that lofty sky before? And how happy I am to have found it at last. Yes! all is vanity, all is a cheat, except that infinite sky. There is nothing, nothing but that. But even that is not, there is nothing but peace and stillness. And thank God!...'"

Or we find it in Allen Tate's causerie on the imagination and the actual where he sees symbolically the significance of the hovering fly in one of the scenes of Dostoevski's The Idiot, or in E.M. Forster's Aspects of the Novel, which discusses the scene in The Brothers Karamazov where Mitya, who is accused of murdering his father, has his remarkable dream.

Whether in Hemingway or Homer, Dostoevski or Tolstoy, Donne or Marlow, what must always animate the reader of the continuing humanistic discourse is the pleasurable spirit of amateurism. Yet this is not a spirit that precludes the effort to get a little beyond ourselves. Everything the amateur does is a test shot, and what he is really trying for is not alone to make conjectures certainties but to make a conjecture open into further inquiry. What the American painter, Albert Pinkham Ryder, found to be true of himself is true of the spirit of the amateur everywhere, in-and-out of the reading of literature. Ryder compared himself to an inchworm which clings to the end of a twig, revolving in the air,

"trying to find something out there beyond the place where it has no footing." This is the spirit of all human effort, amateur or professional. It is what renews the continuing discourse. Hemingway, in the modest little chapter under discussion in this talk, was, after his own fashion, trying to tell us what he felt and thought about humanity in the Spanish Civil War through one of its humble participants. It was his way of clinging to the end of a twig and revolving in the air, but it takes the whole book and especially its last scene to realize what he found out there beyond the place where he had no footing. Similarly, up here on the mountain where our footing should be somewhat more secure, we are about to make our own attempt in a six-weeks session "to find something out there beyond the place where we have no footing." This is our part in the adventure of the continuing discourse.

Bread Loaf School of English
1959 Seniors (9)

Cowan, Ruth Miriam
DeMuzio, Constance Elizabeth
Eddy, Katherine Brainerd
French, Ruth Shaw
Mello, Robert Charles (President)
Nilsen, George Howard
Peterson, Lydia Buth
Termohlen, Karen Elizabeth
Tyrer, John Lloyd

BREAD LOAF SCHOOL OF ENGLISH

1959

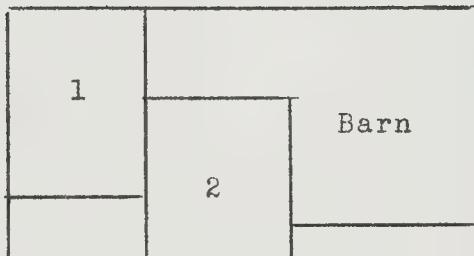
General Statistics

<u>Student attendance by states:</u> (according to home address)	Total student attendance	157	
California	2	Men students	65
Colorado	1	Women students	92
Connecticut	8	Old students	69
Dist. of Columbia	2	New students	88
Florida	2	Graduated post-1950	105
Illinois	9	Graduated pre-1950	52
Kansas	1	Undergraduates	6
Maine	1	Number of colleges repr.	117
Maryland	1	Off-campus students	16
Massachusetts	21	Candidates for a Midd. M.A.	95
Michigan	1	Scholarship students	8
Minnesota	2	Seniors	9
Missouri	2	Prospective 1960 seniors	17
Nebraska	2	Veterans	7
New Hampshire	6	Auditors	14
New Jersey	9	Working for 8 credits	13
New Mexico	1	" " 7 "	4
New York	29	" " 6 "	102
Ohio	7	" " 5 "	12
Oklahoma	1	" " 4 "	9
Oregon	2	" " 5 "	1
Pennsylvania	19	" " 2 "	2
Rhode Island	2		
South Carolina	5		
Utah	1		
Vermont-	6		
Virginia	4		
Wisconsin	3		
Canada	4		
England	2		
Puerto Rico	1		
Turkey	1		
<u>(27 states & D.C. represented)</u>			

Attendance by courses:

Mod. Works of the imagination	12
Stagecraft	18
Elements of writing	55
Art of fiction	48
Amer. naturalism	39
Elizabethan lyric	54
Milton	25
English satire	29
European novel	48
Rebel in Amer. fiction	53
Early English Renaissance	15
Whitman and Dickinson	40
The Comic	23

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES
1959



8:30 A.M.

17	Elements of Writing	Mr. Meredith	Barn 2
23	The Elizabethan Lyric	Mr. Davidson	Barn 1
22	American Naturalism	Mr. Whicher	Little Theater 3

9:30 A.M.

54	Early English Renaissance	Mr. Kelley	Barn 2
33	English Satire, 1710-1820	Mr. Baker	Barn 1
37	The European Novel	Mr. Gibian	Little Theater 3

10:30 A.M.

5	Modern Works of the Imagination	Mr. Meredith	Barn 2
21	The Art of Fiction	Miss Drew	Little Theater 3
70	Whitman and Dickinson	Mr. Whicher	Barn 1

11:30 A.M.

7b	Stagecraft	Mr. Volkert	Little Theater 5
32	Milton	Mr. Kelley	Barn 2
105	The Comic	Mr. Gibian	Barn 1
41	The Rebel in American Fiction	Mr. Baker	Little Theater 3

The Bread Loaf School of English

Programs for the 1959 Session

- Wednesday, June 24 Opening exercises in the Little Theater at 8:15
- Saturday, June 27 Square dancing in the Barn at 8:45 P.M.
- Monday, June 29 Robert Frost reading in the Little Theater
 at 8:15 P.M.
- Saturday, July 4 Square dancing in the Barn at 8:45 P.M.
- Monday, July 6 Babette Deutsch, lecture on "Poetry in an Age
 of Anxiety" in the Little Theater at 8:00
- Saturday, July 11 Square dancing in the Barn at 8:45 P.M.
- Monday, July 13 Granville Hicks, lecture on "Patterns in Con-
 temporary Fiction," in the Little Theater
 at 8:00 P.M.
- Friday, July 17 One-act plays in the Little Theater at 8:30
 Endgame by Samuel Beckett
 The King's Threshold by William Butler Yeats
- Saturday, July 18 Square dancing in the Barn at 8:45 P.M.
- Monday, July 20 A musical program in the Little Theater at 8:00
- Saturday, July 25 Square dancing in the Barn at 8:45 P.M.
- Monday, July 27 Miguel Rubio, Spanish guitarist, in the Little
 Theater at 8:00 P.M.
- Friday, July 31 Drama: T. S. Eliot's The Cocktail Party in
 the Little Theater at 8:30 P.M.
- Saturday, August 1 Square dancing in the Barn at 8:45 P.M.
- Saturday, August 8 Awarding of degrees in the Little Theater
 at 8:15 P.M.

The Bread Loaf School of English

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
William Meredith

August 8, 1959

As you may know, a few of us are kept on here on the mountain after school: the women from Ripton and East Middlebury who apparently will put up with any amount and both kinds of education, the waiters who have unusual talent or stamina or curiosity, me, and Robert Frost. It didn't occur to me that Mr. Frost would be here tonight, and this is an interpolated paragraph so that when I come to the part I was going to try out here, that I was working up to present to him if it went over all right here, he will be disarmed. I had not meant to make much of my bachelor gown. But now I mention it in passing, the way Father Damien said we lepers, for any sympathy it may enlist among friends on either side of the platform who haven't actually earned an advanced degree, no matter how many patchwork quilts they have. There is a poem of Mr. Frost that might stand in place of my address, called The Fear of God. But do not comfort yourselves that it will. I will revise only for classification, not for brevity.

At the end of any human term, we have a superstitious impulse to self-congratulation. It is certain that all our endeavors are beset with danger: there is enough faintness in our own hearts to assure that. And it is certain, too, that the tribe needs encouragement after each new feat of survival. It is natural and seemly that we should dress up and remark to each other in public on our successes, even though we make no greater claim for ourselves than Mr. Daedalus did when he drank with his old friend: "Thanks be to

God, Johnny, that we lived so long and did so little harm."

When we go down the mountain tonight or tomorrow, we will be the fortieth company of our line. It is interesting to think of what effect we and the other ghostly thirty-nine bands--hardly less ghostly for those of us who recognize our former selves among their numbers--have on the lands we descend to after our high, voluntary retreat. We cannot determine this influence, or indeed anything else we really want to know, by polls. But if we rely, as intelligent people habitually do, on informed parties, we may believe that the tone of American education is raised perceptibly by what has been done here.

A sense of failure, even a partial sense of failure, is not something that we entertain publicly. But I believe it is entertained privately, in some degree, by everyone whose experience is at all like my own. And if I venture to speak of this private experience on an occasion of public thanksgiving, that is because it seems to me one of the rarest and most fragile of our human faculties. It is a sensibility without which a teacher must immediately become a saint or a monster, usually a dull monster. I doubt that the loss of this personal sense of imperfection affects men and women in any profession leniently. There are probably failures appropriate even to the parachute jumper and the coloratura soprano, which are chastening without being fatal. However that may be, the nature of teaching, as I understand it, forbids perfection. Let us waive perfection lightly: it has always struck me (from some distance away) as a sticky business. Thanks be to God we have lived so long without the illusion of infallibility.

Our enterprise essentially fallible: we have chosen to live in

the steady presence of excellence. We live there on rather seedy terms, to be sure: a good deal of the time that is asked by poetry is demanded by the laundromat. We are not so near to perfection that our clothes keep clean of themselves, or that the world feels impelled to send us laundresses. But it is for excellence that we wash and whirl and dry--for the excellence of Chaucer, Shakespeare and all the lofty dead on one side, for the vulnerable excellence of the young on the other. Every day, or three times a week, the dead come from the past to counsel us; while the young, in an even more voluntary gesture, come all the way from the future to listen to us, bearing all kinds of ingenious ignorance with their excellence, which we must remove like jackstraws.

Both what and whom we teach is dynamic--not to say shifty--in its excellence. Ideas are never really subdued and are forever subduing us in unexpected ways. And we need put this only a little differently to describe our students, a notorious bunch of opportunists. It is probably our conduct of the first of these struggles, the one with ideas, that chiefly recommends ourselves, and the subjects we profess, to a student. Where is the student who does not light up at the prospect of shouting, go it teacher, go it bear! And whether he identifies with us or with the bear is no matter, so long as he sees that it is a hulking noble great bear. The teacher indeed who, faced with proper pupils and his own chosen subject, does not know failure is simply not paying attention.

Our human opponent, the student, is no more formidable--is actually the same opponent--the one we know familiarly and of old in ourselves: the simple syndrome of laziness and ignorance. But the ideal or imaginative opponent--the very bear of excellence--he is a

more exotic adversary. We wrestle with the excellence of language, which I suppose is absolute. Or we wrestle with literature, where that excellence is most securely fixed. Because of the nature of these adversaries, rather than from any faintness of heart, we must retain a sense of partial failure just as long as there is sloth or mediocrity in our minds.

For those of us who live by this pantomime, acting out for those who have not seen it the struggle with the excellent bear, one kind of failure seems to me to be worse than all the others, and to be avoidable. Remember that when they first come to us, anyhow, our audience has never seen a bear unless perhaps a stuffed one. What we must not do is to make the bear look easy or foolish or harmless, in order to display our own virtuosity. Nor must we, after a lifetime of inconclusive scuffling with the brute who is so real to us that we are a little matter-of-fact for all our awe, let it look as though the whole thing is a show that we perform for applause or money when in fact there is no bear. At first, remember, our students see the grandeurs of literature and language only as the scientist describes the nucleus of the atom--according to the courses which the visible takes in its dance around the invisible. They appear to listen to what we say about the bear, but they watch the way we handle him and judge him by that. Better they should be sent howling from the classroom in an honest terror of excellence than that they doze in their seats thinking they have seen a wretched tamed creature.

Most of us who are here tonight have had our minds extended, whatever their original dimensions, to the point that we can avoid the obvious mistakes and temptations of teaching. Whether we work

in kindergarten or graduate school, we do not ask students to echo us. We do not rely except in moments of feebleness on the outward signs of success, the student who is really grateful, or the student who has really caught fire. We deny ourselves, although it is not always necessary, immoderate ambitions of place or fortune. We are free, it would appear, to give a pretty good account of the language and literature we profess.

Yet the falling away from our intention is something we need always to guard against. It happens sometimes just when we stop looking for it, when, after some years of study and practice, we have our subject pretty well under control. We attain a modest eminence as the marshal of a state-wide foray against child-guidance, or we become (through a series of exposés and retirements) the second leading authority on the Northumbrian dialect. We sharpen our wits--and no matter on what side of the paper curtain that divides faculty from student here--at rarefied summer altitudes in Vermont. Who could suggest of such teachers that we are narrow, or do not represent to our students the issues of the mind in their white light?

And yet what sometimes happens is not narrowness, or specialization, or boredom. It is simply that men and women forget why they are doing what they do, and with this forgetfulness they lose any conviction they might carry to their juniors. But surely, we tell ourselves, we know why we are teachers and scholars. There is no nonsense in our heads about life-adjustment. We believe in the discipline of the mind. We believe that intelligent human conduct begins in an understanding of the human condition, and all our disciplines come from and go toward this end. But even as I say this,

it sounds like the drone of my classroom voice when I have bored the bear and he will not help me finish my long, abstract sentences any more. For do not all such explanations of what we are doing here, what we mean to be doing as teachers, fail to convey those spontaneous, almost physical reasons with which we entered on our careers? It is the courtship that we have lost sight of--the excitement and unbearable curiosity that led us by way of our infatuation for letters and language, to the lives we now live. It is certain no sane person in recent years should have entered our profession for any expedient reason. There is something quixotic about it, the way people climb mountains or save the National Geographic. And it can only be continued in that spirit of adventure, however experience may modify it. Only when we are in the habit of retracing the path of enthusiasm that led us to teaching are we apt to convey our subject in a way that will tease our students into thought.

In his journals, André Gide speaks of a gardener who, in his zeal for the art of espalier, prevents the trees from fruiting. His description of Mius the gardener is an allegory of the teacher whose proficiency has become an end in itself. "The pruning of our fruit trees is dreadfully behindhand," Gide wrote one March; "the sap is rising. I have taken active part in it and every day have spent almost four hours at it. I get furious with Mius when I discover the absurd arrangement of his espaliers. Since he sacrifices everything to appearances, and since the least empty spot upsets him, he contrives to bring a branch forward from anywhere whatever to take the place of the missing one, which he should have known how to get the tree to produce. Impossible to describe the acrobatic contor-

tions and odd arrangements my trees were forced to by that limited mind. His dream would have been to write his name everywhere in bent branches..."

This seems to me a danger to any of us who loses sight of the vision that first committed us to this bold, imprudent calling. Before we know it, we are writing our name in bent branches across the classroom, as if there were no such thing as apples.

If we have done our work at all well here this summer, it is this failure that we will have avoided or at least postponed. The voluntary spirit in which we work, the variety of us, the importunity of natural beauty--all these make us mindful of first things. I think it is even healthy for a teacher to contemplate, from time to time, the possibility of going straight. I contemplate it sometimes in April or May, and write to my friends in publishing houses. Fortunately or not, they are always as unenthusiastic about my editorial availability as if I had offered them a narrative poem. But in the end I know quite well why I am teaching and why, in my way, I can teach. It has to do with a shapeless liking for poetry and students, taken in conjunction. It may be that we are only the Perle Mestas of the Life Force, giving an uninterrupted series of parties where the future can get to know the past in congenial surroundings, at our expense, and without much caring what our names are. Certainly we move among our betters. Because I wear a bachelor's hood, it is possible for me to call your attention to the rest of the faculty here, whose distinctions are nevertheless far more than academic ones.

Chiefly of course our enthusiasm is renewed by what literature is. No one can spend six weeks here and fail to experience this

force. These are the words that make us pay attention to the world. We look not at them but through. It is the measure of great language that it never shows us quite the same thing twice. Every year when I come to "Sailing to Byzantium" I hear myself say to the class: "But surely the most miraculous thing about the poem is..." and, when the kind bear who finishes the vast generalizations of well-meaning schoolteachers tells me what it is, it is different from last year. I am different from last year. My apprehension of language and meaning is different. The most miraculous thing about "Sailing to Byzantium" is obliged to be different. They send another bear.

In Donne's Third Satire the image for excellence is a huge hill, as we have made a mountain ours. For most of us the approaches are so devious as to make the curve through Ploof Hollow seem a very turnpike of directness. And the mind has mountains, as Hopkins tells us, that are terrible to scale: "cliffs of fall Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap (he) May who ne'er hung there."

But "why have we wings," the wisest man on our mountain has asked, "if not to seek friends at an elevation?" Mr. Frost, who no more has wings than I can fly, is pulling our leg a little, or perhaps it is the nature of truth to pull our legs.

In the reckoning which I have been allowed to make, on behalf of the nine seniors who are about to become my seniors in the academic hierarchy, I want to strike the formal stance that characterizes our dealings with excellence. I see us standing like old-time boxers, a little ridiculous but conscious of a certain honor: conscious of who we are and of the resourcefulness and reality of

the foe--perhaps still undiscovered--whom we have nonetheless chosen. It is a stance that I let John Donne take for us. His words about the mountain act out as well as describe my thesis, that we fail a little and that we always win:

On a huge hill
Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and he that will
Reach her, about must, and about must goe
And what the hills suddenness resists, winne so....

Hard deeds, the bodies pains; hard knowledge too
The mindes indeavors reach, and mysteries
Are like the sun, dazzling, yet plain to all eyes.